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# MATERIAL FROM ENGLISH LITERATURE ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY-SCHOOL LESSONS.

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## I. THE HEALING OF A GIRL POSSESSED OF A DEVIL. II. BRUISED FOR OUR INIQUITIES. III. FORGIVENESS.

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I. *The healing of a girl possessed of a devil.*—Beneath the simple words of this brief narrative are vivid suggestions of a home made desolate by the terrible affliction that has befallen the daughter. The fervor and the enduring quality of the mother's love, and her inability to do anything for her daughter, send her instinctively to Jesus as one who has not only love but power. What her love would accomplish at any cost if it could, surely omnipotent love will accomplish for her. We find exactly this theme in Browning's *Saul*. David tries in all ways to arouse Saul from his lethargy. Untwisting the lilies from his lyre, he attunes the strings to all the varied harmonies that could touch Saul's nature. His heart yearns over Saul, and then suddenly out of his love and his yearning springs his glad recognition that divine love exceeds human love, even as divine power exceeds the utmost of human effort. His vision of this love and this power becomes a prophecy of Christ who shall throw open to Saul the gates of everlasting life :

See the King—I would help him, but can not, the wishes fall through.  
Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,  
To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing which  
I know that my service is perfect. O speak through me now!  
Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou, so wilt thou!  
So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown—  
And thy love fill infinitude wholly.

II. *He was bruised for our iniquities.*—In Spenser's *Hymn of Heavenly Love* we have a thoughtful, musical, yet impassioned expression of man's indebtedness to Christ for the self-sacrificing love manifested in his coming down

Out of the bosom of eternal bliss,  
In which he reigned with his glorious Sire,

that he might pay the deadly hire of sin and restore to hapless man the possibility of joy. "For man's dear sake he did a man become." He passed through the toil, the pain, the poverty, and all the sharp assays of this sad life; he was scourged, buffeted, bruised, twixt robbers crucified, that he might free his foes. In lieu of all this pain of love he asks but love again.

Whittier in *The Crucifixion* describes the change in nature at the death of Christ

When He, the chosen One of Heaven,  
A sacrifice for guilt was given !

\* \* \* \* \*

Oh, shall the heart—whose sinfulness  
Gave keenness to His sore distress,  
And added to His tears of blood—  
Refuse its trembling gratitude !

One of the most pathetic and beautiful passages in Cowper's *Task* presents the healing that comes to man through the suffering of Christ :

I was a stricken deer that left the herd  
Long since ; with many an arrow deep infix'd  
My panting side was charged, when I withdrew  
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.  
There was I found by One who had Himself  
Been hurt by the archers. In His side He bore,  
And in His hands and feet, the cruel scar.  
With gentle force soliciting the darts,  
He drew them forth, and healed and bade me live.

George Eliot says :

The true cross of the Redeemer was the sin and the sorrow of this world—that was what lay heavy on His heart—and that is the cross we shall share with Him, that is the cup we must drink of with Him, if we would have any part in that Divine Love which is one with His sorrow.

In Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* the terrible nature of the Mariner's sin against the law of love comes out most clearly when the angel compares his cruel act with the supreme act of love of "Him who died on cross."

In Frederick W. Robertson are these words :

The life of Christ and His death are the only true solution of the mystery of human life ; to that, after all, all the discords of this world's wild music must be attuned at last. Christ has the keys to the Mystery of Life. The spirit of the cross is the condition which will put any one in possession of the same key.

The cross on Golgatha can never save thy soul ;  
The cross in thine own heart alone can make thee whole.

Christ rose not from the dead—Christ still is in the grave—  
If thou for whom he died art still of sin the slave.

— *Angelus Silesius* (1624-1677).

III. *Forgiveness*.—In *Christian Morals* Sir Thomas Browne gives excellent advice on the subject of forgiveness :

Write thy Wrongs in ashes. Draw the Curtain of Night upon Injuries, shut them up in the Tower of Oblivion, and let them be as though they had not been. . . . Forgive thine enemies totally, and without any reserve, that however God will revenge thee. . . . If thou must needs have revenge of thine enemy, with a soft tongue break his bones, heap coals of fire on his head, forgive him and enjoy it. To forgive our enemies is a charming way of Revenge, . . . a method taught from Heaven to keep all smooth on Earth. . . . If thou hast not Mercy for others, yet be not Cruel unto thyself. To ruminate upon evils, to make critical notes upon injuries, and be too acute in their apprehensions, is to add unto our own tortures, to feather the Arrows of our Enemies . . . for injuries long dreamt on take away at last all rest.

Emily Dickinson has some quaint stanzas that bear on this theme :

I had no time to hate, because  
The grave would hinder me,  
And life was not so ample I  
Could finish enmity.

Nor had I time to love ; but since  
 Some industry must be,  
 The little toil of love, I thought,  
 Was large enough for me.

For a grave, simple expression of the futility of hate, see Whittier's *Forgiveness* :

My heart was heavy, for my trust had been  
 Abused, its kindness answered with foul wrong ;  
 So, turning gloomily from my fellow-men,  
 One summer Sabbath day I strolled among  
 The green mounds of the village burial place ;  
 Where, pondering how all human love and hate  
 Find one sad level ; and how, soon or late,  
 Wronged and wrong does, each with meekened face,  
 And cold hands folded over a still heart,  
 Pass the green threshold of a common grave,  
 Whither all footsteps tend, whence none depart,  
 Awed for myself, and pitying my race ;  
 Our common sorrow, like a mighty wave,  
 Swept all my pride away, and I forgave.

In *Among the Hills* is another stanza holding a good philosophy for daily life :

For still in mutual sufferance lies  
 The secret of true living ;  
 Love scarce is love that never knows  
 The sweetness of forgiving.

In Thomas à Kempis we find a reason for this mutual sufferance :

If thou canst not make thyself such an one as thou wouldest how canst thou expect to have another in all things to thy liking ?

"To err is human, to forgive, divine," is one of Pope's excellent ethical aphorisms.

Portia's famous description of mercy in *The Merchant of Venice* is really a fine analysis of the spirit of forgiveness.

One of the great concrete literary exemplifications of forgiveness is in Tennyson's *Guinevere* :

And all is past, the sin is sinned, and I,  
 Lo ! I forgive thee, as Eternal God  
 Forgives : do thou for thine own soul the rest.

An interesting variation of the theme is found in Sidney Lanier's *The Crystal*. He goes over in his mind all "the governor-spirits, the bards, the bringers-down of flaming news from steep-walled heavens," but finds that no one, however great, shines with undimmed luster :

Yea, you masters all must ask  
 Some sweet forgiveness, which we leap to give.  
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 But Thee, but Thee, O sovereign Seer of time,  
 But Thee, O poets' Poet, Wisdom's Tongue,  
 But Thee, O man's best Man, O love's best Love,  
 O perfect life in perfect labor writ,  
 O all men's Comrade, Servant, King, or Priest,—  
 What *if* or *yet*, what mole, what flaw, what lapse,  
 What least defect or shadow of defect,—  
 Oh, what amiss may I forgive in Thee,  
 Jesus, good Paragon, thou Crystal Christ.